

Shaping Downtown Seattle

Downtown Zoning Changes



Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on Proposed Downtown Zoning Changes published January 6, 2005.



Shaping & Managing Growth

Concentrating growth in downtown Seattle is environmentally and economically critical to the future of the city, and the region. Shaping and managing growth within the region's largest urban center is a fundamental tool in fighting urban sprawl.

People are choosing to live and work in Seattle's Center City. Major transit investments are being made in this area. The growth is coming; the challenge is to manage it wisely.

The zoning changes being proposed will encourage more housing downtown while continuing to support the growth of the region's largest job center.

"We're moving forward on two major goals - promoting affordable housing and encouraging smart growth for the city and region."

– Mayor Greg Nickels

Neighborhood Plans into Action

Refashioning Downtown zoning to promote more housing, address office growth and help fund affordable housing, began with the neighborhoods. Plans were developed to supplement Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.

The Preferred Alternative analyzed in this FEIS is the latest in a series of actions undertaken by the City to implement Downtown neighborhood plans approved by City Council in 1999. These recommendations are drawn from plans developed by the Denny Triangle and Commercial Core neighborhoods and the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group. Also addressed are issues raised about development on the edges of the Belltown neighborhood.

In 2001, major changes were made to the City's bonus programs that increased the density incentive to support affordable housing. Greater changes requested by the community needed more intensive environmental review, as required by State law. In May of 2001, the City began the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, which provided the opportunity to examine the long-term implications of the proposal for achieving neighborhood plan objectives. In November 2003, the draft EIS was published for public review and comment.



Center City Strategy

The Center City Strategy encompasses the downtown commercial core and nine surrounding neighborhoods (see map on page 8). The strategy coordinates planning activities in these diverse, and individually-unique neighborhoods providing a coordinated vision for growth in the region's most densely populated area. The Preferred Alternative will strengthen the Downtown's role as the region's employment center, while promoting a stronger role for housing in the core of Center City. More people will have the opportunity to live and work in a much more sustainable environment.



Shaping Downtown

The Preferred Alternative

Sustainable Growth

Perhaps the greatest contribution the proposal would make to urban sustainability is directing a large share of the city's future growth to high density mixed use environments that encourage walking and transit use. Eliminating the minimum parking requirement for commercial uses will support a more transit and pedestrian friendly environment. Furthermore, downtown projects are subject to standards supporting environmentally sound development – such as requirements for on-site storm water retention facilities, limits on the amount of parking a project can provide, and requirements and incentives for pedestrian amenities and open space.

Housing

Under the Preferred Alternative, development built to the maximum density limits will contribute more to bonus programs for affordable housing and the preservation of existing low-income housing resources downtown. For the first time, residential projects built to the maximum height and bulk allowed will contribute to affordable housing programs.

In several zones, the greatest increases in height are reserved for projects that include housing. As a further incentive for residential development, the proposal allows future housing sites to sell unused commercial development rights to developers of commercial projects at other locations. Under the Preferred Alternative, by 2020 funds for affordable housing could increase by \$35 million, for a total of \$95 million, compared with current zoning potential.



Building Design

The Preferred Alternative will better control building bulk. Height limits have been adjusted to allow for more slender development, resulting in more attractive taller and thinner buildings, particularly in the Denny Triangle.

Increased height limits and limits to floor sizes and building widths, would make future towers appear more slender than projects built under current rules. This will help provide more light and air at street level and create the opportunity for a more varied and architecturally interesting skyline. Proposed changes will also increase incentives for mixing of uses like housing and commercial space on a development site.

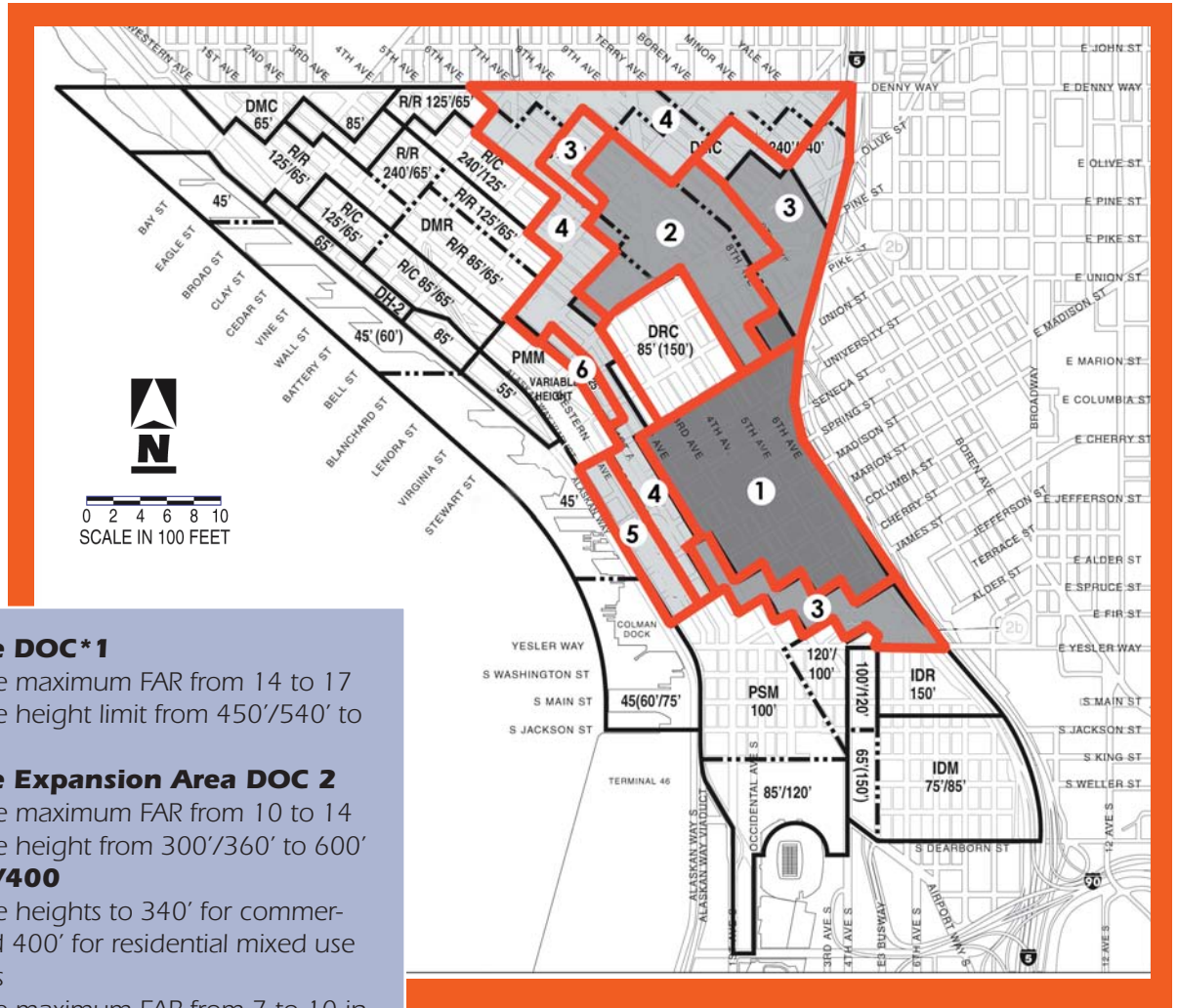
Seattle's Downtown Streets

As new development fills available sites, the streetscape will be enhanced with street level uses and other pedestrian amenities that are either required or encouraged through incentives. New development along designated Green Streets provides the opportunity to implement the designs for Green Street improvements, increasing open spaces within downtown.

Traffic

The EIS evaluates the congestion impacts that are likely to occur with future growth under any alternative, most notably in areas near I-5 in the Denny Triangle. While additional congestion is likely with future growth, it is not likely to exceed acceptable standards. Encouraging residential growth Downtown will itself help mitigate congestion caused by too many single-occupant vehicle commuters.

Preferred Alternative



1. Office Core DOC*1

- increase maximum FAR from 14 to 17
- increase height limit from 450'/540' to 700'

2. Office Core Expansion Area DOC 2

- increase maximum FAR from 10 to 14
- increase height from 300'/360' to 600'

3. DMC* 340/400

- increase heights to 340' for commercial and 400' for residential mixed use projects
- increase maximum FAR from 7 to 10 in DMC areas

4. DMC 240/400

- 240' height limit for commercial and 400' for residential and mixed use projects
 - maintain existing maximum FAR of 7
- Note: Two half-blocks between Pine and Union Sts. on Second Avenue have been included in the study area for this Final EIS.

5. DMC 160/240

- increase height from 160' to 240' for residential and mixed use projects
- maintain existing maximum FAR of 7 and 160' height limit for commercial projects

6. DMC 125

- No Change

* **DOC** = Downtown Office Core

* **DMC** = Downtown Mixed Commercial



Downtown Bonus in Action:

New Washington Mutual/ SAM Highrise

\$5.3 million contributed to affordable housing:

- 395 units preserved or produced with these funds and additional public and private funds:
 - Morrison Hotel renovation
 - St. Regis renovation
 - The Gilmore (new construction)
 - ID Village Square (new construction)
- \$1 million to City's housing fund for future projects

Preferred Alternative

ZONE	Base FAR (no change)	Existing Maximum FAR	Proposed Maximum FAR	Existing Height Limits	Proposed Height Limits
1.* DOC 1 (commercial core)	6	14	17	450'/540'	700
2. DOC 2 (west of 9th Ave)	5	10	14	300'/360'	600'
3. DOC 2 (east of 9th Ave)	Reclassified to DMC 340'/400'				
3. DOC 2 (southern edge of Commercial Core)	Reclassified to DMC 340'/400'				
4. DOC 2 (1/2 block west of 3rd Ave in Belltown)	Reclassified to DMC 240'/400'				
3. DMC 340/400 (includes about half the existing DMC 240 areas in Denny Triangle and DOC 2 areas east of 9th Ave in Denny Triangle and southern edge of Commercial Core)	5	7 in existing DMC areas 10 in existing DOC 2 areas	10	240' in existing DMC areas (312' with TDC** in Denny Triangle) 240'/288' and 300'/330' in existing DOC 2 areas (390' for residential and mixed use with TDC in Denny Triangle)	340' for commercial uses; 400' for residential and mixed use
4. DMC 240/400	5	7	7	125', 160', 240' (162.5, 208', and 312' for residential and mixed use with TDC in Denny Triangle)	240' for commercial uses; 400' for residential and mixed use
5. DMC 160/240 (Western edge of Commercial Core)	5	7	7	160'	160' for commercial; 240' for residential and mixed use
6. DMC 125 Pike Place Market	5	7	7	125'	125'

* Numbers refer to categories listed on page 4.

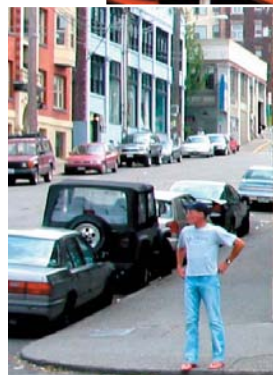
**TDC = Transfer of Development Credits

What is FAR?

Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of the gross floor area in a building to the total area of the land on which it is built. For example, a building with 200,000 square feet on a 20,000 square foot site would have a FAR of 10 (200,000 divided by 20,000).

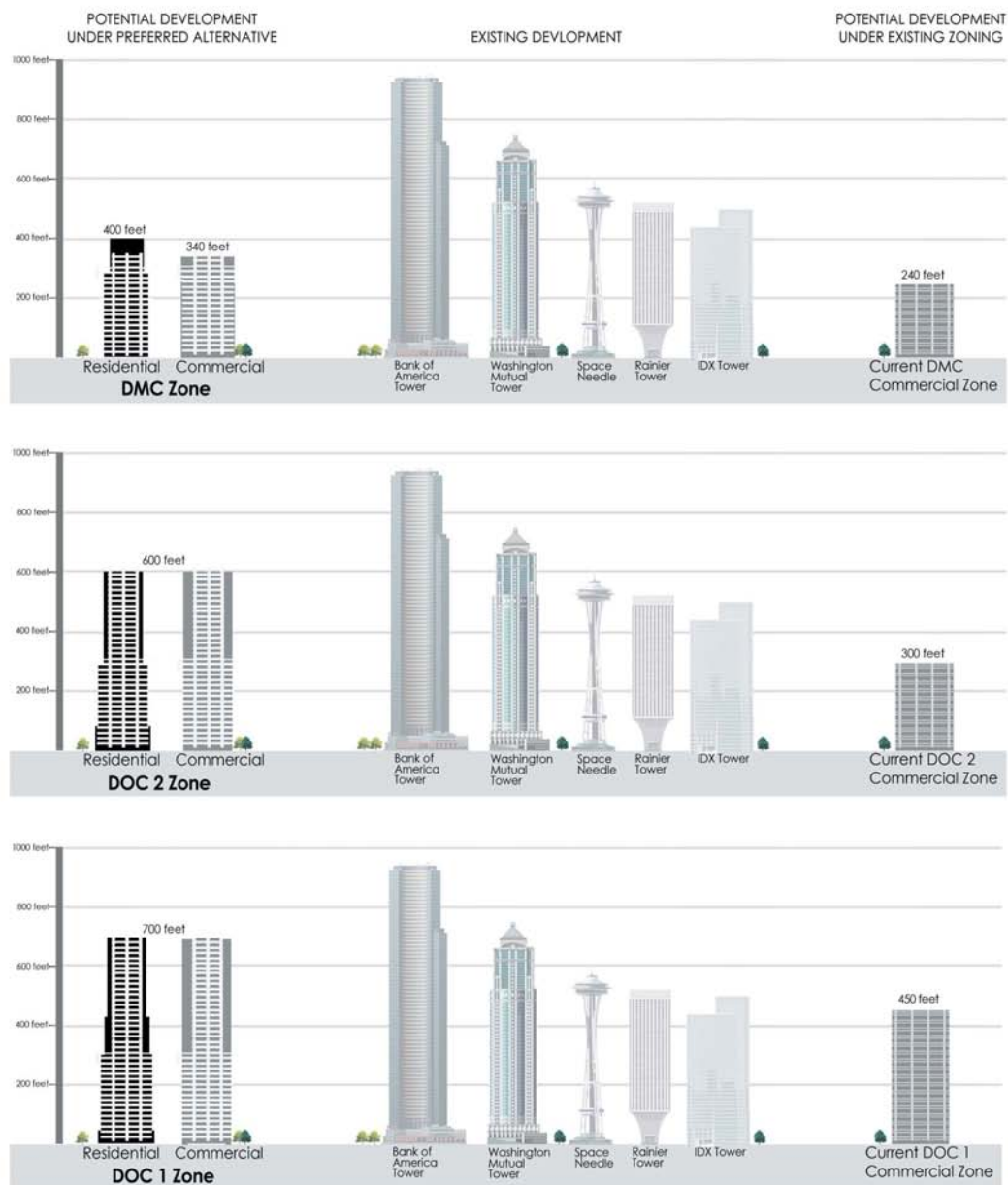
Bonus Rule

All FAR increases above base FAR to maximum FAR are gained through current bonus/Transfer Development Rights (TDR) provisions with 75%-25% split between housing/child care and non-housing options. The exception is the DMC 240/400 zone, where the increase could be gained through use of commercial TDR, landmark TDR, low income housing TDR, or open space TDR, or the 75%-25% split.



Building Heights Comparison

Comparison of Proposed and Existing Building Heights

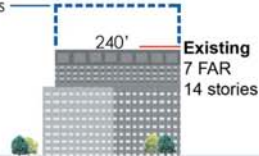


F.A.R. Comparison



Floor Area Ratio Comparison

Proposed max. FAR: 10
340', 22 stories



DMC 340/400 Zone

Stewart Place
(proposed)



Long Full Block 360'

Proposed max. FAR: 10
160', 11 stories



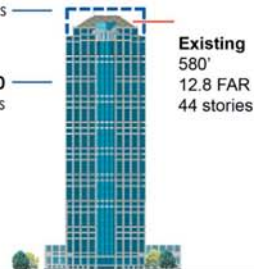
Blanchard Plaza



Long Half Block

Proposed max. FAR: 14
600', 48 stories

Current max. FAR: 10
440', 34 stories



DOC 2 Zone

U.S. Bank Centre



Long Full Block 360'

Proposed max. FAR: 14
340', 26 stories

Current max. FAR: 10
250', 19 stories



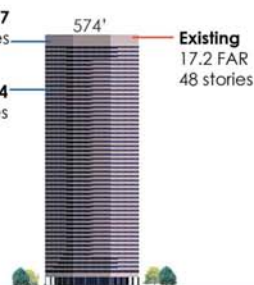
Qwest Plaza



Long Half Block

Proposed max. FAR: 17
564', 47 stories

Current max. FAR: 14
468', 39 stories



DOC 1 Zone

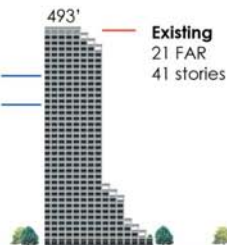
Wells Fargo Center



Square Full Block 240'

Proposed max. FAR: 17
400', 33 stories

Current max. FAR: 14
340', 28 stories



1000 2nd Avenue



Half Block

Skyscrapers from skyscraperpage.com

Center City Seattle

Livable...Walkable...24/7

Visit the
Center City Seattle
project website at:
[www.seattle.gov/
mayor/issues/
centercity](http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/issues/centercity)



**“We’re building
a livable,
walkable, 24/7
Center City.”**

—Mayor Greg Nickels



City of Seattle

Office of the Mayor
(206) 684-4000
www.seattle.gov/mayor

Next Steps...

Legislative Process

DPD expects to complete the proposal for Land Use Code amendments by late February. An ordinance will be sent to the City Council for a full review in its legislative process. This will involve hearings and discussions at the Council's Urban Development and Planning Committee, and discussion by the full Council. This will provide additional opportunities for public comment in the decision making process.

Final EIS Copies Available

Copies are available on-line at <http://www.Seattle.gov/dpd/planning/downtownzoning>, or for public review at the Seattle libraries and neighborhood service centers. Final EIS copies and summary documents are also available at no cost at the Public Resource Center (PRC), 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue in Downtown.